G Lattimer G-8 (1890-92) DS07 .K19 Dard 4/93

C. BIRTH CEREMONIES.

As soon as the child is born the father or the Mulla repeats the "Bâng" in his ear "Allah Akbar" (which an Amir, of the name of Mirza Khan, said was never again repeated in one's life!). Three days after the reading of the "Bâng" or "Namâz" in Gilgit and seven days after that ceremony in Astor, a large company assembles in which the father or grandfather of the newborn gives him a name or the Mulla fixes on a name by putting his hand on some word in the Koran, which may serve the purpose or by getting somebody else to fix his hand at random on a passage or word in the Koran. Men and women assemble at that meeting. There appears to be no purdah whatsoever in Dardo land, and the women are remarkably chaste.* The little imitation of purdah amongst the Rajas of Gilgit was a mere fashion imported from elsewhere. Till the child receives a name the woman is declared impure for the seven days previous to the ceremony. In Gilgit 27 days are allowed to elapse till the woman is declared pure. Then the bed and clothes are washed and the woman is restored to the company of her husband and the visits of her friends. Men and women eat together everywhere in Dardo land. In Astor, raw milk alone cannot be drunk together with a woman unless thereby it is intended that she should be a sister by faith and come within the prohibited degrees of relationship. When men drink of the same raw milk they thereby swear each other eternal friendship. In Gilgit this custom does not exist, but it will at once be perceived that much of what has been noted above belongs to Mussulman custom generally. When a son is born great rejoicings take place, and in Gilgit a musket is fired off by the father whilst the "Bâng" is being read.

* This is said to be no longer the case, except in those Dard countries, where foreigners have not yet interfered. In accordance with pure, and, above all, in Hunza, women hardly have ever been seen. Where Sunni rulers have exercised dancing together the dancing of men (formerly both men and women danced together), a worse evil has been introduced. A new sexual relationship is the one created by the fancy-mother. The linguistic portion of "The Hunza Bagrot Handbook," as also of Parts I. and II. of "Dardistan," solves the questions of whether and where polygamy, endogamy, etc., existed among the Dards, who, in appearance and sentiment as regards women, as also in legendary lore, are very "Europæan," but whose progress will convert into strict Mohammedans and haters of the "Feringhi."

718 keep cool in Provision, who was a servant of everybody. On this the Vadia took "Tuna" to the well, and he came with him to the palm of the Vadia. The object was explained to him and he said that a bird called Garai Paran, who lived on the snows on the Lunsu Mountain, should be sent for at once. Provision was then sent the messenger, but on his arrival he found a mouse, whereupon Tuna was sent to him and he came to see Bajan Dhal and Vanta Hal Singh. Bajan Dhal saw one for a mouse which lived close to his home. When everything was ready the wall gave orders that Vanta Hal Singh should stand in water as a pillar upon which Garai Paran should spread his wings, while the mouse by the making a hole into the ice should bring out and spread all the soil over the wings of Garai Paran. The orders were obeyed and the wings of the bird covered all the water, while the mouse brought out all the soil which was beneath the water. In this way the earth was turned over the water.

X.°

"Shinku Bai" (Tree Bore Stone).

(17) 718 There used to be at Gilgit a blue stone called "Shinku Bai," about a yard square, where the present telegraph office is situated. No king was acknowledged in the country unless he had resorted to it and prostrated himself before the stone. There and then the people adorned his head with a crown, swore fealty and tendered their allegiance. This was the day when all the lower class would gather to see the son "Bai" perform all the ceremonies, and undergo all obligations considered necessary to the office of leader of the nation. This was done in order to secure their confidence by a man who was to become sole director over their destinies, among them being many who had taken an active part in bringing him to the throne and proclaiming him their chief.

When the ceremonies were over, all came one by one to kiss his hands, to receive his blessings and to bless him in return. They would then dance to the beating of drums, make merry, sing praises and recite poems describing the heroic deeds already performed by the Ra, his ancestors and others whose lives had become endeared to all by self-sacrifice in the cause of their country.

[719] The dasawi (soothsayer) was not left out on this occasion, for it was necessary to foretell the future of the king and his courtiers, and to exhibit the state of victory that accompanies prophecy by the soothsayer. Before being dismissed at night all present partook of a feast; some were gratified with handsome dresses and other distinctions; some gratified by a gesture of kindness.

The Custodian of Shinku Bai.

778 776 ● [illegible] 782 Shri Bai is the name of a goddess who, as the people say, lived on a rock at Nangam, a village in the Astore district. The rock too is called Shri Bai, and is always kept covered with branches of juniper, while an attendant called "Bab Bia" resides there to look after it. Barren women used to sacrifice goats to and pray before the sacred stone in the hope of progeny. In the hot weather, when the people had gathered their

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* [illegible]

songs, the female population of the village proceeded to the Dirri in their best attire. They sang on their way, and when they reached their destination presented a goat to the "Bab Bin." She then threw up some small branches of the juniper in the air, and the women attempted to catch them before they fell to the ground. It was believed that a woman would be blessed with as many children as the branches she succeeded in catching. Descendants of the original "Bab Bin" still remain, but the ceremony is no longer observed.

A stone of this kind is also found at Barmas near Gilgit. The ceremony performed upon this stone was exactly the same as stated above, but it has a different name, viz. "Mullum."

"Rato" or "Chilo."

At Parkuh, a village in the Bagrot valley, there are five small portions of land situated at the foot of a mountain and called Chato Rato, Shilo Rato, Sargun Rato, Chilo Rato and Thako Rato. In these tracts there are five very large boulders and five small stones, called respectively "Dee-ai Mama" and "Mee Sasiawa Kee" (i.e., stone for distributing flesh). Here the "Rato" ceremony, also called "Chil," used to be performed as follows. During the first six days of the ceremony, which lasted for seven days, the people were new and clean clothes, the sexes being separated and inhabiting different houses. On the seventh or the last day, all the people of the different communities or families of the village assembled separately and went to their respective "Ratos" with a goat and some young branches of the chili or *Juniperus macrocarpa*. These branches were placed upon the "Dee-ai Mama," and the blood of the goat which was now sacrificed was thrown on. The meat was placed on the "Mee Sasiawa Kee" and distributed among those present, who roasted and ate it at the same place. It was never given to any woman or to a man of any family other than that of "Rato." The shoulder-blade of the goat killed was then placed on a high stone and fixed on by northern amidst the noisy acclamations of the people, and a dance was held in honour of the sacred ceremony. After this the people assembled round the "Dee-ai-Mama," while the elders near present or the headmen of the village sat quite close to the stone and addressed it in the following manner: "O you-like Rato, O Shri Bagurtham, we have come to you to express our wants. We have no progeny; kindly endow us with children. We are destitute of money; kindly favour us with gold and silver. We are in want of grain; please supply us." In the same manner he related all their desires for cattle, clothes, goods, etc., while the other men followed him and expressed their assent to what he said by crying "Amen." The women of the village now appeared in their best attire, with some dry flour and small fat leaves. They threw the ash on the *chili* branches and prayed in the same manner for the fulfilling of their desires. The leaves were distributed among the men, who ate and rejoiced. As usual places the women were strictly prohibited from going near the Rato stone. This ceremony was performed and known by the same name throughout the whole of Gilgit, but its stones of different names, so that the stones at Darashi and Bubin were called "Aja Bin," at Sherkot "Shri Bin," at Gilgit and Danyore "Rato-dandam," and at Nomgam "Shri Bin." The

Rato, A.S.S.

A. Biddulph G-8 (1870-1879) 1880 A1S [illegible] A1S
[illegible] A1T

In Gor, rings are exchanged at marriage. In the ruling families of Hunza and Nagar, it is the custom, when a daughter is married, for the bridegroom to present her at betrothal with a gold and silver needle. In Yasin, when, as not unfrequently happens, the bridegroom is too poor to pay the required price, the young couple elope, with the consent of the bride's parents. At the end of ten days the bridegroom comes to them and asks forgiveness, promising to pay the required sum by degrees. A little scene is acted, forgiveness is granted, the neighbours are summoned to the feast which has been already prepared, and the wedding is celebrated. This is to save the credit of the bride's family in not having received a sufficient price for her.

The old marriage barriers between the castes are beginning to be broken down under the levelling influence of Mahommedanism, and in a few generations will probably disappear altogether. The birth of a son is always a matter of general rejoicing. The friends of the happy father at once make it an excuse to stop work for the day, and seizing their matchlocks keep up a general *feu-de-joie* till their powder flasks are empty. The village band is summoned, and dancing kept up round the door for the rest of the day. No notice is taken of the birth of daughters. In the Otuo Valley and in Sirikol, when a son is born, all the father's friends hang their weapons on the walls of his house, so as to accustom the infant to martial sights. After seven days the weapons are returned to the owners, except those belonging to near relations, who receive special presents in exchange.

After the birth of a child a woman is esteemed unclean, and no one will eat from her hand for seven days. North of the Hindoo Koosh this period is extended to forty days, and for the first seven the infant is not allowed to suckle its mother.

I have elsewhere discussed the old custom of disposing of the dead by burning. Now the common form of Mussulman interment is used. A small flat slab of earth about two feet long is neatly plastered over the graves, and a light is kept burning at night by newly-made graves, under the pretence of keeping away wild beasts till the earth has hardened; but, as Mr. Drew has remarked, this is more probably a relic of the old practice of cremation. No attention or care is paid to old graves, which constantly present a most unpleasant appearance, owing to the falling-in of the arched roof. I remarked in Sirikol the same want of attention to old graves